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NAVY MEDICINE IN FOCUS

Naval Hospital Bremerton Lab Blood Bank acknowledged for professionalism

BY VJOHNSON – FEBRUARY 5, 2015

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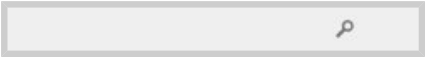
The vast majority of the work conducted in Naval Hospital Bremerton’s Laboratory Department Blood Bank is routinely accomplished behind the scenes. It is rare for the staff to be in the spotlight, but they were twice during the last week of January 2015.

The FDA (Federal Drug Administration) conducted an unannounced annual inspection in which the Blood Bank passed, and the collective efforts by the bank were also recognized by the Armed Services Blood Bank Center Pacific Northwest of Madigan Army Medical Center, Joint Base Lewis-McChord in support of the Armed Services Blood Program.

“We congratulate our lab colleagues on their successful inspection. The FDA did its annual inspection of our blood bank. They were extremely complementary on both our Blood Bank organization, processes and staff knowledge. Bravo Zulu to our Blood Bank staff,” said Capt. Christopher Quarles, Naval Hospital Bremerton (NHB) Commanding Officer, specifically citing Capt. Patrick Lawson, Lt. j.g. Tammy Nguyen, Mr. Raymond Craigmiles, Hospital Corpsman 1st Class KC Geisler, and Mr. Eduardo Delossantos.



It takes a team... with never any real down time in Naval Hospital Bremerton’s Laboratory, medical lab technicians continually work around the clock in support of all inpatient clinics and departments, as well as ensure that the Blood Bank is staffed on a 24-hour, rotational basis. Such attention to details was noted during the last week of January 2015, as the Federal Drug Administration conducted an unannounced annual inspection in which the Blood Bank passed, and the collective efforts by the bank were also recognized by the Armed Services Blood Bank Center Pacific Northwest of Madigan Army Medical Center, Joint Base Lewis-McChord in



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support of the Armed Services Blood Program (Photo by
Douglas H Stutz).

NHB’s Laboratory is licensed by the FDA, and has also been fully accredited by the College of American Pathologists (CAP), American Society for Clinical Pathology (ASCP) and American Association of Blood Banks (AABB).

“The FDA is one of several (outside organizations) that ensures our Blood Bank is compliant and within regulations. Because we use Blood Bank product as a therapeutic drug for patients we also fall under the FDA. They show up to check if our regulations are maintained properly and other details like our temperatures are not compromised, our documentation is not outdated and we have the proper signatures for providers. Our staff was ready for their visit and it is a good feeling to know that we’re doing the best we can,” said Nguyen, Laboratory Department officer in charge.

Although NHB’s Emergency Room has transitioned to an Urgent Care Clinic and the Intensive Care Unit was closed due to low patient usage, there is still a need to be prepared for any blood product needed primarily from NHB’s 4OB clinic, General Surgery and Main Operating Room.

“We’re on standby most of the time, but when we’re needed, we have to be there with the right blood for the right patient. The most important part of my job is transferring safe blood products to the patient,” said Geisler, medical laboratory technician and Missouri native.

Compiled statistics show that about one in seven people who enter a hospital like NHB will need blood. That’s stateside-relevant data, not related to the recent past with blood products in demand at forward operating bases, combat outposts and trauma team settings in Afghanistan. But blood products collected at NHB are still distributed world-wide to support blood needs, including with troops still downrange, veterans and their families.

One pint (or unit) of donated blood can not only save up to three lives, but can also be separated into multiple, vital components of red blood cells, plasma, platelets, and cryoprecipitate. The red blood cells carry oxygen to the body’s organs and tissues. Plasma is a mixture of water, protein and salts and make up approximately 55 percent of the actual blood volume in the human body. Platelets help promote blood clotting, and cryoprecipitate, which is collected from plasma that has been frozen, then thawed, is a crucial coagulation agent.

“It’s not an uncommon practice to split the unit of blood into the different components – we still do – but it’s more common to do apheresis collections, so if people can only donate plasma or platelets separately, they can as well instead of just whole blood,” Nguyen said.

Nguyen notes that there is never any real down time in the laboratory. Laboratory personnel continually work around the clock in support of all inpatient clinics and departments. The Lab is also open to beneficiaries for specimen collection and drop-off Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. and on Saturday from 8 to 12 a.m.

Enlisted personnel assigned to the Lab are comprised of advanced medical laboratory technicians, histopathology technicians, and cytology technicians, throughout five locations. Besides the majority working in NHB’s main lab, they are also at Branch Health Clinic Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, BHC Bangor, BHC Everett, and Madigan Army Medical Center Armed Services Blood Bank Center.

“But it is really Mr. Raymond Craigmiles who is the backbone of our program,” stated both Nguyen and Geisler.

The Blood Bank is staffed on a 24-hour, rotational basis by Medical Lab technicians ,who also handle such specific jobs/duties/responsibilities as; collecting blood or body fluids from patients; accessioning patient samples to allow automated equipment and Laboratory information systems to analyze, interpret, and result provider ordered testing; processing patient samples to allow ordered tests to occur; perform testing in Chemistry, Hematology, Urinalysis, Coagulation, Microbiology, Immunohematology (Blood Banking), Serology, Histology, and Cytology; Collating and verifying testing results; Certifying the authenticity of results and release them to the health care providers; Conducting Quality Control and Quality Assurance Initiatives to ensure the continued accuracy and precision of reported results; and maintaining equipment in every area listed above.

“Our goal not only in our Blood Bank but our Lab as a whole is in saving and helping the patient. We’re always in the background, but we make sure that it happens,” Geisler said.

The overarching goal of NHB’s Laboratory Department is to continually assist internal and external customers to the best of their ability. They support Navy Medicine’s mission of enabling readiness, wellness and health care to Sailors, Marines, their families, and all others entrusted to them, be it on land or at sea. They are always ready to assist fellow service men and women and will continue to collect valuable blood products to sustain life and support the U.S. Navy.

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